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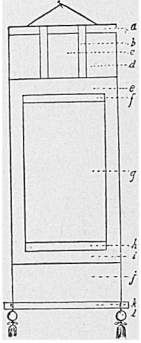
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# THE KAKEMONO AND ITS USAGE

BY THE COUNTESS ANNIE DE MONTAIGU

*With illustrations from notable ancient and modern kakemonos.*



A TYPICAL KAKEMONO

a, hiyomoku; b, futai; c, upper jidai; d, chiu no kami; e, chiu beri; f, upper ichimonji; g, picture surface; h, ichimonji; i, lower chiu no shimo; j, lower jidai; k, makijuki; l, fuchin.

design of flowers, birds, or figures. This silk, often of thin or transparent texture, is sized in such a manner that it becomes an excellent vehicle for the retention of transparent washes in India-ink or water-colors.

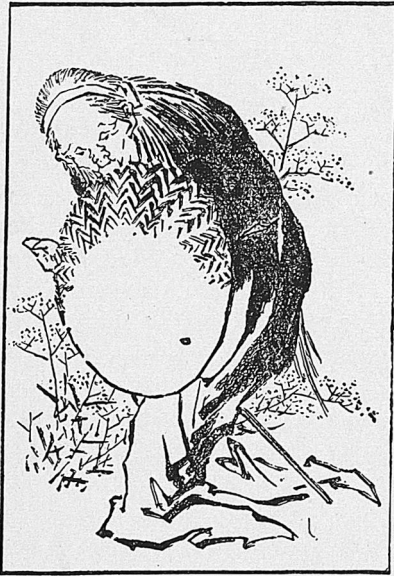
Some magnificent specimens are wrought with the needle, with infinite skill and delicacy; there are others in which the kindred arts of painting and embroidery contend for supremacy. Gold plays an important rôle in the Japanese scheme of color; in needle-work untarnishable gold-thread is used, and in brush-work the Japanese artist makes lavish use of gold-leaf, which he lays on, thus forming a luminous background intended to heighten and contrast with the gorgeous colors of flowers, birds, or fishes.

THE art of Japan may be designated as decorative rather than pictorial. Many erudite scholars believe it to be an evolution of the multiform and picturesque calligraphy of that land, the word *kaku* standing for both writing and drawing. Although the Japanese defy every known canon of perspective, ignore the meaning of proportion, and use color with a lavish exuberance, the *tout ensemble* produced is pleasing and artistic. The artist conventionalizes everything in nature, but we forgive him his idiosyncrasies in view of the adorable harmony of even his most insignificant compositions.

In the Japanese dwelling there are no pictures, according to the conventional acceptance of the term, no oil-paintings with ornate gilded frames and an area of canvas replete with labored detail. In their place there is the kakemono, a gay and pleasing mural hanging, consisting of a strip of silk, satin, or crêpe, painted in a bold



KANAOKA PAINTING A PORTRAIT: AFTER YOSAI



AN OLD BEGGAR : BY HOKOUSAI

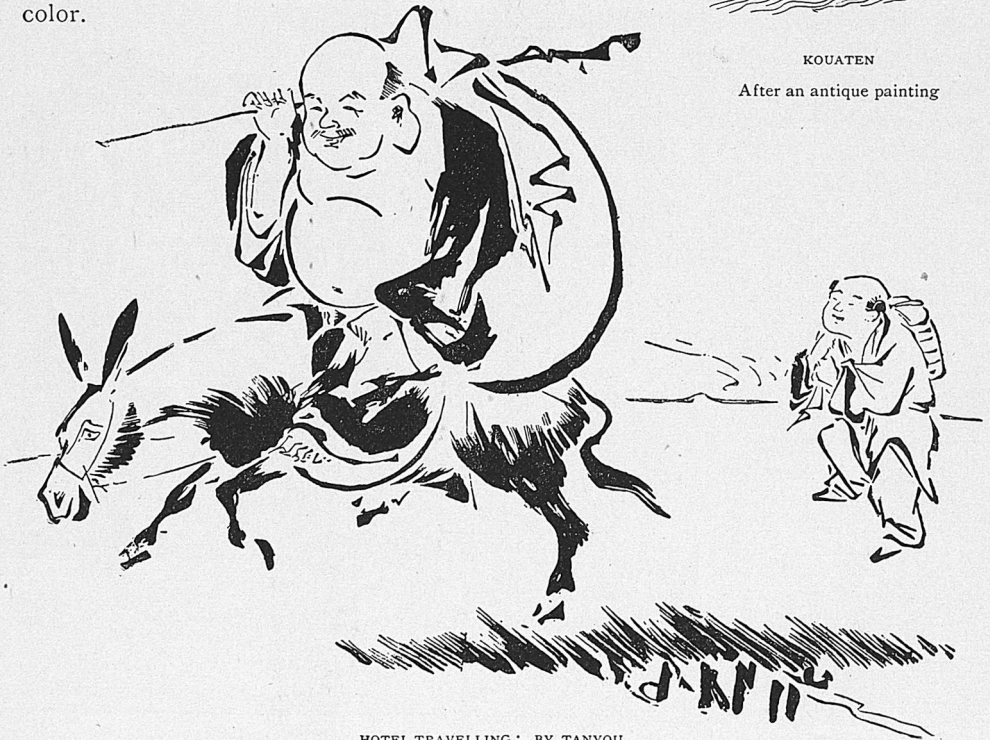
Less expensive are the kakemonos of paper. The paper of Japan is not a perishable, flimsy material like ours, but is almost as tough as vellum and as enduring as a textile fabric. One can purchase these pretty scroll pictures for a ridiculously small sum in the Orient or even in this country, where they are commonly called "banners;" but the painting on even the cheapest ones reveals

the instinct for art inherent in the Japanese soul. It would be nearly impossible to find two alike. Every art-worker imbues his creations with his own individuality, and never twice reproduces the same details of form and color.



KOUATEN

After an antique painting



HOTEI TRAVELLING : BY TANYOU

The kakemono is appropriately framed in bands of rare brocade, gold or silver cloth, or of silk or paper decorated with

a painted pattern. The bordering usually harmonizes in design and color

with the subject. A glittering golden net-work is sometimes placed at the top or bottom, a silken fringe or other suitable finish. It rolls up like a map, and is weighted at the bottom with a cylinder of wood, bone, or ivory. From this cylinder sometimes depend handsome tassels of silk or carven ornaments of bronze, bone, or ivory; but these ornaments are admissible only on very expensive examples. When not in use the panel is carefully rolled up, deposited in a box covered with silk or paper, and put away until it is needed.

The kakemono has no determinate dimensions, the size being governed by the whim of the artist, or the space in which it is to be hung.

From a yard to a yard and a half is a common size, the width being considerably less. The correct form is long and narrow, as is indicated in the diagram on page 65, where the terminology of the parts is given. Some fine ones, however, measure as much as seven to twelve yards in length. These are rarely seen, except in princely dwellings, where the rooms are extremely spacious, or in temples.

Some of the finest ancient examples are enshrined in sacred temples, many of them being representations of Buddha and the numerous pagan gods worshipped by the Japanese; others are emblematical, consist of holy symbols, and are bordered with the most expensive fabrics. The kakemono is a favorite adornment for the tea-house, the gayest ones being selected for this purpose.

Although time and labor are of small moment in this far-away kingdom, the painter works rapidly, obtaining his happiest effects with a few telling strokes of the brush. A skilled man can easily paint a kakemono in two hours, and the results are often marvellously fine.

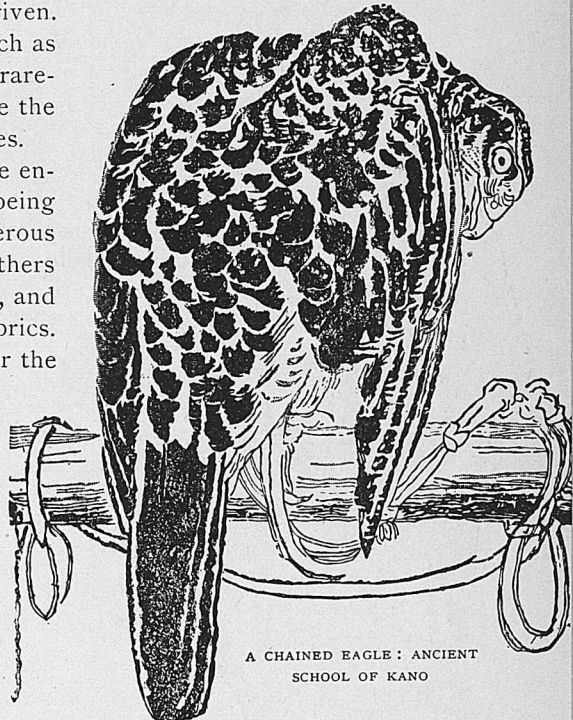
With his innate love of flowers, it is small wonder that the native artist



DUCKS. BY SESHU



A STARLING: BY MOTONOBU



A CHAINED EAGLE: ANCIENT  
SCHOOL OF KANO





A CAT: ANCIENT SCHOOL OF TOSA

devotes some of his best efforts to their reproduction. The kiku, or chrysanthemum, the royal or golden flower of Japan, is the one most frequently portrayed, the multi-petaled blossoms of snowy white and pale gold being depicted with marvellous faithfulness. The feathery plumes of the bamboo, the gaudy dyes of the hollyhock, the flaunting peony, the burning poppy, the sacred lotus, the queenly rose, the lovely blossoms of the peach, cherry, and plum trees, are all treated with infinite grace and feel-

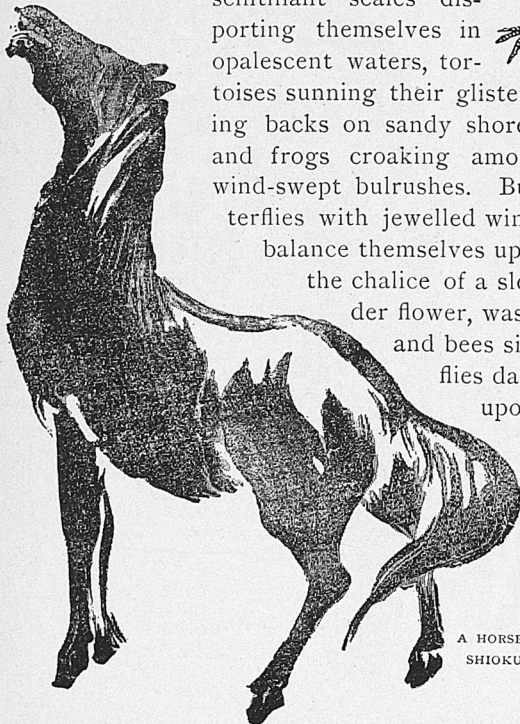
ing. Birds, insects, and reptiles are favorite subjects: storks standing on one red leg in dark-blue ponds, nightingales sleeping upon clematis boughs, sparrows twittering among wistaria blooms, thrushes hiding in the midst of a tangle of wild grasses, fish with scintillant scales disporting themselves in opalescent waters, tortoises sunning their glistening backs on sandy shores, and frogs croaking among wind-swept bulrushes. Butterflies with jewelled wings balance themselves upon the chalice of a slender flower, wasps



A FALCON DEVOURING A HERON: BY TSHIOKOUVAN, 1720

and bees sip the sweets from fragrant hedgerows, fireflies dart through moonlit vapors, and beetles crawl upon the dewy sward. Mythological subjects are frequently depicted.

Most of the important events of existence are made the occasion of the hanging of a kakemono, the appropriate sentiment being evident to the initiated. Upon the occasion of a birth, a wedding, or a funeral, on fête days, or on the arrival of a distinguished stranger, ap-



A HORSE: BY SHIOKUADO

propriate kakemonos are hung in the reception chamber. The kakemono destined as a welcome to the callers on New-year's-day has its own peculiar significance; the feathery plumes of the bamboo and the plum blossom are never omitted, the bamboo symbolizing longevity and the plum branch the revivification of nature. Another may represent a flight of storks, which translated means "many good wishes." The stork is the emblem of good luck and the tortoise of long life; associated, they mean sincerest wishes for a long and prosperous existence.

The kakemono is invariably assigned to the place of honor in a home, and is hung in a receptacle known as the tokonoma. This is a hooded and partitioned recess made of bamboo or some light wood, built at right angles with the wall of the room, and so constructed that it always



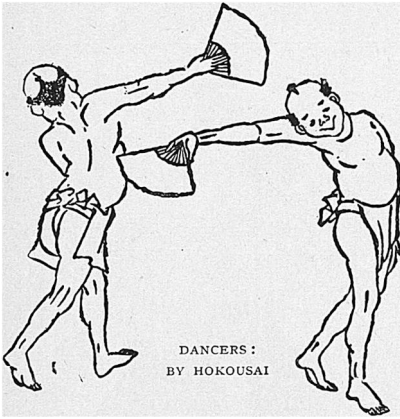
AN EVENING ESCAPE: BY OUTAMARO



A WOMAN: BY SHIUNSHO

commands a good light. In this niche is hung one, or perhaps two, kakemonos, three being deemed an evidence of inartistic taste. Wealthy persons possess a number of these pretty panel-pictures, which are sometimes changed as often as three times a week, the changes being governed by the season, the occasion, or the rank of the company expected.

When a distinguished guest is to be entertained, the host endeavors to discover his taste in decoration. Should he be a connoisseur of landscapes, the finest one the house affords is



suspended within the tokonoma. Should a lady signify her preference for a certain flower, the gallant host pays homage to her charms by enshrining a kakemono thus decorated within the recess designed for it. It may be that some august visitor disdains trivial pictures, and prefers to contemplate a kakemono inscribed

with a heroic poem, a maxim from Confucius, a homely proverb, or a pungent epigram.

The Japanese host, after the long salutations



AN OLD SMOKER: 18TH CENTURY

have been exchanged, invites his guests to partake of tea and cakes; this refectation at an end, they are led before the tokonoma, the visitor of honor being assigned a seat upon a fragrant mat or priceless rug placed in front of it; there he sits in rapt contemplation of the work of art,



GOLD TAPESTRY: 18TH CENTURY

discussing its merits with his host and the assembled company. Nowhere in the world are such ceremonial and delicate attentions lavished upon the stranger as in Japan, and the kakemono is always the first object the visitor is invited to inspect. The Japanese believes that if the same kakemono were always

on view the sight would become monotonous.

In Japan the art of painting is of such ancient date that its origin is enshrouded in the mists of antiquity. China, India, Corea, and Persia exercised a notable influence upon early Japanese art, but its history cannot be traced back farther than the ninth century. Kosé Kanaoka is said to be the father of painting; he was the painter and poet-laureate of the imperial court, and is regarded as the



CULTIVATING RICE: BY MOTONOBOU, 1684



most eminent artist of antiquity. But few of his works are extant, and they are treasured with such veneration that they are dedicated to the sacred shrines. His portrait, on p. 65, shows him in the customary attitude of the Japanese artist when at work.

Up to the beginning of the seventeenth century the Japanese painters disdained to reproduce any but heroic and religious subjects. It was not until the eighteenth century that any paintings portrayed the every-day life of the common people. Four artists soon became celebrated as prominent exponents of this new school of art. Iouasa Matahei was the founder of it, and has presented to posterity the pictorial history of the common people. He shows the peasant laboring in the field, the shopkeeper vending his wares, the artisan plying his various vocations, and the courtesan with her painted cheeks and gorgeous raiment. Hence the kakemonos of Matahei are of inestimable worth to the antiquarian, as they

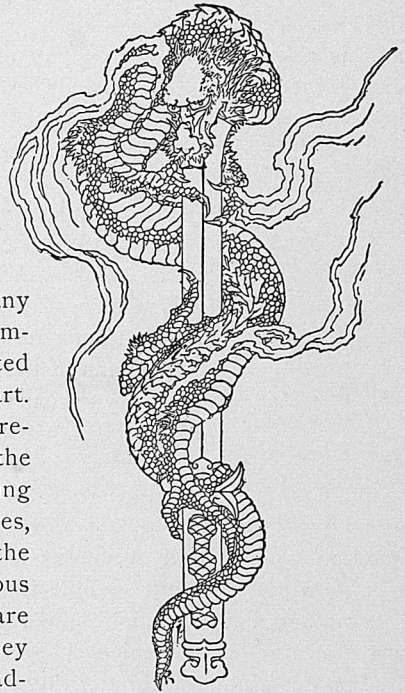
depict with admirable fidelity

the manners and costumes of old times.

Motonobou was another able exponent of the realistic school; he began life as an art-embroiderer, and the embellishment of textile fabrics with fine needlework was due to his influence. It was he who created the fashion of the sumptuous trained robe still worn by the women of Japan.

Katsou-Kava was also a realist or impressionist. He devoted his talents to painting scenes from the theatre, and also pictures of women engaged in various occupations, with a smiling landscape or a sumptuous interior for a background. These paintings of picturesque peasant girls, these counterfeit presentments of gaudily apparelled actors, are mostly to be found decorating the walls of tea-houses. Katsou-Kava was an able exponent of this school of art, which had many followers; he revelled in brilliancy of color, and under his skilful fingers the saffron yellows, the turquoise blues, and the rich violets were blended into a harmonious ensemble with consummate skill; his figures seemed imbued with life and motion.

Yeisai was one of the most delicious colorists



A DRAGON: AFTER HOKOUSAI



THE WARRIOR SHOKI: BY SHIOUNSHIO



of the latter-day impressionistic school, and is responsible for originating the exaggerated type of female who soon became the fashion in the cities of Japan.

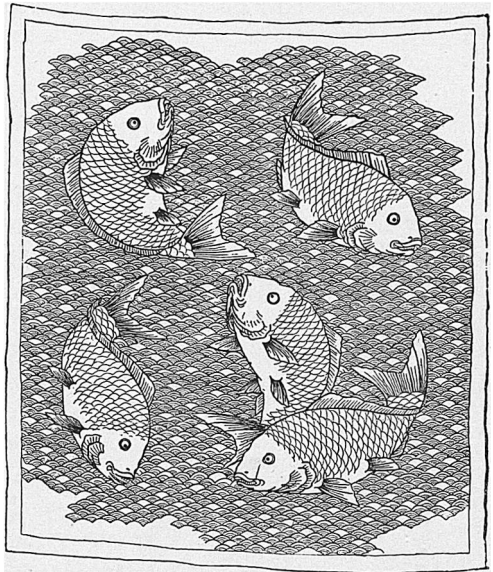


A SKETCH: BY  
KEISAI KITAO

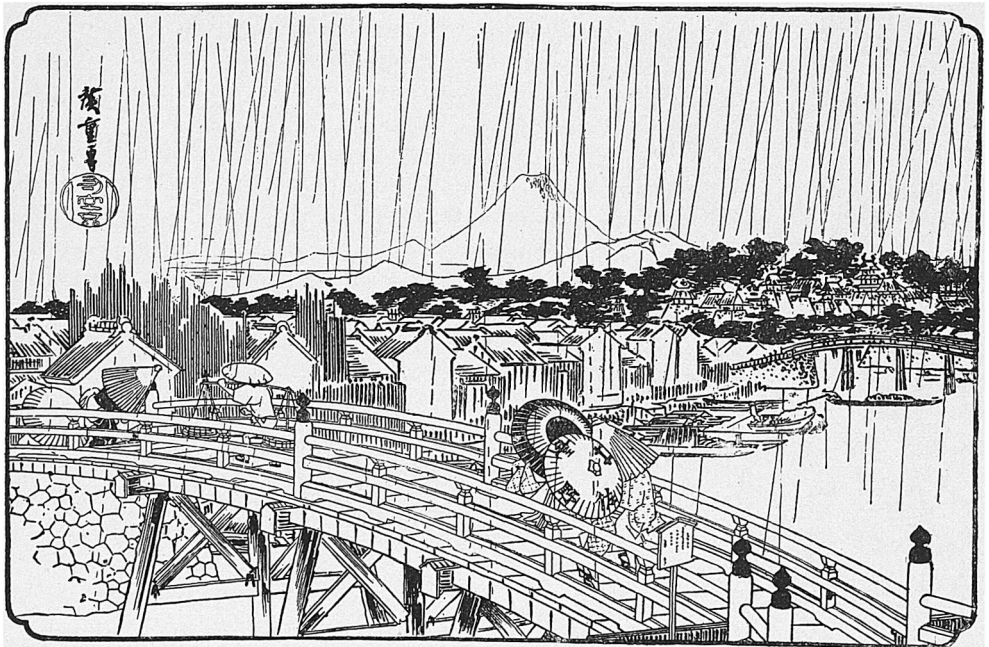
Although these exaggerations shock our refined tastes, we cannot fail to admire the voluptuous grace of his women, clad in the sumptuous stuffs that the looms of the Orient alone can produce. Another painter fond of portraying

females of the refined aristocratic type was Outamaro, whose women are imbued with a languid sensuous charm. His paintings greatly resemble those of the modern French school, and remind one of a mellow rhythmical harmony in music.

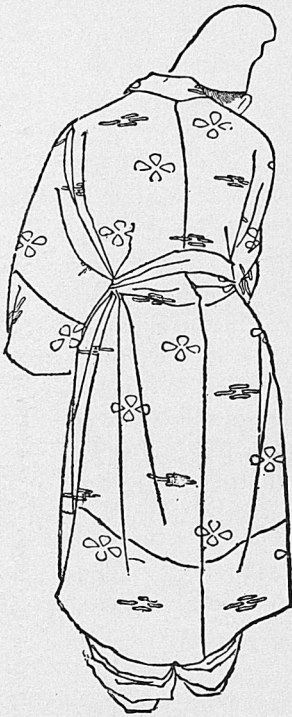
Hakousai is undoubtedly the greatest painter, from a European stand-point, that Japan has ever produced, and may justly be compared with the most distinguished painters of Europe. His works are a veritable encyclopædia of dress and customs, but he was pre-eminently the artist of the people, and died unrecognized by the aristocratic classes.



CARP IN A NET



THE BRIDGE OVER THE SOUMIDA, AT TOKYO: BY HIROSHIGE



ISHIKAWA TOSHITARON :  
AFTER YOSAI

The impressionist school of to-day is represented by the famous Kiosai, whom his admirers designate as the second Hakousai. His strongest point is caricature, and his political cartoons have caused him to spend a part of his life in prison. He is, however, more imitative than original in his methods.

Another modern realistic painter of distinction was Yosai, who devoted his talents to subjects of every nature, and in 1875 was eulogized as the greatest living artist of Japan.

Yeischin is another contemporary artist of merit, and is one of the last representatives of the national school of Japanese painting. A rare vein of poetic sentiment dominates his work.

Japan no longer produces aught but the hybrid in art. The pictorial art of the past is dead, and will never be revived. Her painters are engaged in the production of works which bring money rather than fame, and merit is sacrificed to the golden calf of the foreign market.



A WOMAN : BY SOUKENOBON, 1739

The wealthy collectors of Japan hoard their treasures of ancient art with loving and jealous care, and refuse to part with them except under the spur of necessity. Many beautiful specimens have, however, been acquired by the art-lovers of Europe and America ; the exorbitant prices offered overcame the scruples of those who owned them. France is especially rich in these gems of decorative skill, which are interesting and valuable in elucidating the difference between the schools of the Orient and the Occident, and also because they reveal a parallelism with certain forms of primitive art in Europe. Painters derive their earliest impressions from religion, and many of the pictured deities of Japan resemble Preraphaelite saints and madonnas.



RETURNING  
FROM  
MARKET :  
BY HOKKEI